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ABSTRACT

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Artistic Development as a Process of Universal-Relative Selection Possibilities

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Running head: UNIVERSAL-RELATIVE SELECTION POSSIBILITIES

(Paper presented at the National Symposium for Research in Art Education, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, Oct. 2-5, 1984.)

Abstract

In this paper, the assumptions of stage theory and major theories of child art are reviewed in order to develop an explanation of artistic expression that allows for variable endpoints and accounts for relationships between children's drawings and adult art. Numerous studies indicate strong similarities among children's early drawings which suggests that primarily universal factors of influence are operative. Cross-cultural similarities and differences among adult art suggest that universal factors are still operative although relative factors predominate. In this paper, a model of artistic selection possibilities is developed on the premise that art consists of options selected from universal and relative domains, circumscribed by the imperatives of time, place, and level of skill acquisition. Similarities and differences between child and adult art as well as variable personal and cultural endpoints are accounted for when artistic development is described as a selection process rather than a step-by-step predefined progression.

Artistic Development as a Process of Universal-Relative Selection Possibilities

Most accounts dealing with the broad scope of art instruction make some reference to the nature of artistic development and, more specifically, to the stages through which it is assumed all children progress. Although artistic stage theory has provided an invaluable framework for placing diverse graphic phenomena within a coherent scheme with a specified endpoint, there has also developed a growing dissatisfaction with this approach that emanates from an awareness of numerous discrepancies from the norm.

Without actually dispensing with the referential framework that stage theory provides, Pariser (1983) and Wilson and Wilson (1982), among others, have proposed that a theory be developed that deals with the broader spectrum of artistic expression inclusive of the work of both children and adults. The purpose of this paper is to examine the issues that emerge from stage theory and to develop the general outline of a tentative theory that is based on the premise that artistic expression of all age groups proceeds as a function of available options. In this paper it will be proposed that artistic expression consists of a selection process within the realms of both universal and relative factors of influence, and that the selection process is both circumscribed and given latitude by the development and life experiences that have occurred in universal and relative

domains.

Many of the difficulties with stage theory have emanated from the assumption that children's work and the art of a culture have predefined endpoints. Describing and analyzing child and adult art within a socio-psychological framework rather than primarily within the psychological or aesthetic frameworks used by stage theory proponents, provides a more adequate assessment of the variety of artistic expressions found throughout time and space. Moreover, a socio-psychological framework of universal and relative influence factors is applicable to the graphic expressions of children as well as the art of adults at various chronological ages and developmental stages. In fact, studying the similarities and differences between the art of children and of adults can reveal the impact of universal and relative factors on the art of each; that is, artistic aspects shared by both adults and children suggest universal sources, whereas differences may be attributed to socially relative and developmental sources of influence.

Issues Emerging from Stage Theory

Within the classical framework of stage theory, children's drawings have been studied as a stage-by-stage unfolding of innate developmental schema toward an end-state separate from adult art. From a child's first scribbles, it has been assumed that he or she is embarked on an inevitable graphic venture toward stages of increased symbolic sophistication and complexity occurring at more-or-less

predictable intervals. Stages and substages, such as identified by Lowenfeld (1947) and Lansing (1969), have provided convenient categories to chart this development through successive ages: scribbling (age two to four), early figurative (age three to seven), mid-figurative (age six to ten), late figurative (age nine to twelve), artistic decision (age eleven and beyond) (Lansing, 1969). "Like the Piagetian model, the move from one aesthetic stage to the next can not be aided or hastened" (Jenkins, 1980, p. 81). Accordingly, it has been believed that the art teacher needs to provide an environment conducive to those changes and, at the extreme, to provide no input that might detract from the streamlike, neural processes of development.

Many of the major assumptions of stage theory have increasingly been called into question. For example, there is overwhelming evidence that stages are not experienced as discrete wholes as was originally believed. Wilson and Wilson (1982) have noted that within a single drawing one may find graphic schema that are indicative of several distinct stages. For example, objects may show a diminution of size as a function of distance, yet the same objects may be drawn without reference to the vertical. The value judgment implied by the assumption that graphic configurations consist of a steady progression from the concrete and the simple to the abstract and the complex is simply not warranted by the data. Furthermore, a variety of studies have shown that the art of a culture, and, in particular,

the popular art of mass media in Western societies, influence children's graphic expressions (Wilson, 1974; Wilson & Wilson, 1977). The classical stage theory approach, however, does not allow for how cultural influences shape developmental manifestations and often provide the impetus for novel expressions. Although the cognitive and motor capabilities of very young children essentially preclude the possibility that early development can be substantially changed, for children beyond the scribble and prefigurative stages a wide variety of graphic expressions is possible.

Another major assumption of stage theory has been that a child's level of graphic expression is indicative of achievement in other cognitive domains. This has also simply turned out not to be justified. Pariser (1983) identifies the lack of homogeneity across domains as the most troublesome issue facing stage theory. It appears that stages may be skipped, reverted to, or combined. A most dramatic example is furnished by the children of the nomadic Orotchen tribe of Northern Siberia. At the time of the study, Orotchen children had minimal training in the use of pencil and paper and had, therefore, not experienced the benefits of prefigurative, let alone figurative, drawing exercises. These children, however, were able to draw remarkedly realistic reindeer with a sophistication and sensitivity reserved for adolescent or even adult art in Western cultures. It would appear that cultural imperatives, in this case the importance of reindeer to Orotchen survival, may dramatically

modify movement through the stages (Schubert, 1930).

Essentially, stage theorists have ignored cultural variability as well as how the art of a culture may influence subsequent artistic expressions. To summarize, classical interpretations of stage theory need to be qualified and modified to accommodate the following: (1) children are able to skip stages, (2) developmental stages may be combined, (3) development differs across domains, and (4) cultural values interject imperatives that may deflect a linear development through the stages.

Actually, such qualifications are troublesome only if one unrealistically expects scientific precisionism in artistic activity and if one treats changes within children's graphic expressions as primarily innate, inevitable developments. The elegance, relative simplicity, and predictability afforded by stage theory is attractive, if not mesmerizing; it indicates the human need to find (or impose) order and a strong Western bias for what appears to lead toward culturally defined improvement and progress. Finding graphic similarities among the works of children of the same age and finding developmental characteristics that often conveniently parallel stages of cognitive development and lead toward end goals that approximate the look of Western formal thought processes have done much to suggest that stage theory is the only possible explanation of artistic development. Perhaps, stage theory has actually been too promising an explanation. Perhaps, it has fostered overly stringent

adherence and a concomitant disillusionment when discrepancies appear and qualifications become necessary.

Stage theory and its many ramifications have had wide applicability in art education theory and research. In regard to the latter, stage theory has been especially pervasive, providing ready connections with educational psychology, cognitive theory, and developmental learning theory. Stage theory has perhaps provided the clearest direction and foundation for empirical study in art education and has given scientific status to art education research through the legitimacy that comes from the accumulation of empirical data and through the relationships that can be made with the social sciences. Such benefits and accomplishments are not easily dismissed.

What has been cited as some of the main characteristics, issues, and problems of stage theory can actually serve to form the framework of what needs to be considered in formulating a more comprehensive and elastic explanation of artistic development. First of all, studies of child graphic expression indicate that schematic and prefigurative stages are fairly homogeneous. These early stages exhibit strong similarities throughout time and space, and, hence, may be attributed to innate, universal factors of influence. The fact that, after the early stages, predictability of characteristics becomes more problematic and similarities across domains lessen suggest that noninnate, relative factors of cultural and individual

variability begin to enter the developmental scheme. An over-emphasis on a stage-by-stage unfolding of innate rules has tended to obscure the influence that nurture might have on children's art. A socio-psychological framework needs to be established if the variability afforded by cultural experiences is to be taken into consideration.

Second, an explanation of artistic expression needs to allow for multiple lines of development, or, as will be discussed in this paper, multiple lines of selection among available options. The problems that result from assuming an inevitable development of innate potentialities point to the need for a theory that allows for the impact of both universal and relative factors of influence.

Third, and finally, the focus in stage theory on child expression to the almost total exclusion of adult art speciously separates the work of children from cultural impact, artificially divides human activities into components in order to facilitate study, and implies that artistic expression is primarily a sui generis endeavor separate from social functions. Separating child art from the many socio-psychological factors that influence adult art is partly responsible for theorists seeing many of the discrepancies in stage theory as problems rather than as the source of a more encompassing explanation. Stage theory discrepancies are, in essence, actually the way things are rather than deviations that need to be corrected.

To summarize, stage theory has revealed that there are strong

similarities among early children's art that suggest the presence of innate influences. Difficulties arise if an innate, universal developmental pattern is assumed to be solely responsible for expressions after prefigurative and early figurative stages. In almost a mirror-like fashion at the other end of the developmental and chronological continuum, innate factors have often been denied to have an influence on adult art. In most "explanations of graphic development it is not clear what happens to the innate factors with the onset of visual realism or pseudo-realism" (Wilson & Wilson, 1982, p. 3). A theory of art that answers some of the criticisms and problems of developmental stages must allow for the following: (1) variable expressions and multiple endpoints to artistic development, (2) innate, universal factors of influence in both child and adult art, (3) noninnate, relative factors of influence in both child and adult art, (4) the interaction of innate and noninnate factors, and (5) the relationship of early graphic expressions to adult art.

To develop a theory accommodative of these points, first of all the characteristics of child art will be briefly examined. From this review, it will be proposed that cross-cultural commonalities among early drawings of children indicate the presence of innate factors; those childhood commonalities that persist or surface in adult art can be assumed to be biologically inherited apprehensions and structural principles that are developed and verified by adult experiences. Conversely, differences among children's drawings and

differences between child and adult art are indicative of factors emanating from individual and cultural variations, or, in other words, noninnate, relative influences.

The Characteristics of Child Art

Throughout time and space, without regard for socio-economic distinctions or sex differences, children's drawings are found to be remarkedly similar. Until the ages of five to seven and sometimes even afterwards, it is often difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the art of children from different cultural and experiential backgrounds (Kellogg, 1969). Until broad contact is made with social influences beyond family and neighborhood, child art rather nicely conforms to the program outlined by stage theory.

The controlled scribbling of three year olds and early figurative art of three to six year olds have a certain look that is broadly characterized by an exaggeration of size and parts; multiple, conflicting viewpoints, such as combined floor and elevation plans; the depiction of discrete objects rather than an integration of composition; multiple time frames; and a spontaneous, essentially nonreflexive approach emphasizing tactual, emotive, and kinesthetic properties. Wilson and Wilson (1982) cite the following characteristics as some of the innate rules of children's drawings: (1) simple, undifferentiated shapes, (2) placement made for the greatest contrast of lines, (3) perpendicular orientations to the nearest baseline, rather than a vertical orientation to the earth,

(4) parts, such as limbs, attached to the largest shape, (5) the depiction of concepts as well as percepts, and (6) the depiction of each object within its own space, i.e., without overlap.

Theories of Child Art

Various theories have been proposed to explain the distinctive character of children's drawings. Most often these explanations parallel or are part of the larger stage theory which states that child art development consists of an unfolding of innate rules within stages wherein innate rules are progressively overcome and replaced by noninnate rules thus resulting in more complex and visually accurate drawings.

Cognitivists find evidence that children draw concepts of what is known about the world. As a function of maturation and increased life experiences, concepts are built and elaborated upon resulting in more accurate graphic depictions. Development in art is, according to such explanations, linked to the child's overall cognitive development (Goodenough, 1926; Harris, 1963). Reference is often made to Piaget's stages of mental growth—sensorimotor, preoperations, concrete operations, and formal operations—inasmuch as these levels can be roughly paralleled to the stages of child art (Piaget & Inhelder, 1956). Concept formation is based on the ability to perceive differences and similarities, to abstract and classify such differences and similarities, and finally to generalize classification systems to a variety of instances so that objects and

ideas can be classified according to their properties (Harris, 1963). Although perceptual experiences are crucial to the formation of concepts, for cognitivists the focus is on building stable concepts. Until this occurs, the child is largely dependent on innate rules.

The perceptualists or Gestaltists propose that children draw what they see rather than what they know. Children's drawings develop over time from the simple to the complex with distortions due to children's difficulties in inventing two-dimensional equivalents for what is perceived. With maturity and an elaborated repertoire of graphic equivalents, the child is able to both perceive and express more complex and subtle relationships (Arnheim, 1954; Eisner, 1972; Lansing, 1969).

Perceptualists suggest that in addition to being a function of percept formation, exaggerated size and shape distortions may be due to the child drawing on a large scale and then not having room for the addition of parts or other objects. Distortions and x-rayed figures are due to the child first drawing the most visually obvious aspect; artistic development occurs as the child acquires logical drawing sequences. In contrast to perceptual explanations, theorists prescribing to a personality or psychoanalytical approach believe that children include in their drawings those aspects of an object that are of importance to them, and, likewise, emphasize through size exaggerations that which has the greatest significance (Lowenfeld, 1947).

Kellogg (1969), who will be discussed at greater length later, considers children to be concerned with the aesthetic qualities of their drawings. According to Kellogg, size and placement are dependent on design choices rather than on a child's level of concept or percept formation or on psychological or personality proclivities.

Within the scope of this paper it is certainly not possible, or even necessary, to review all the diverse explanations for children's graphic characteristics and the changes these undergo. However, a perusal of the theories that constitute the bulk of the literature on this subject, identified here as conceptual, perceptual, psychoanalytical-personality, and aesthetic theories, reveal three trends significant to formulating a theory that artistic development consists of a selection from universal and relative possibilities.

First of all, in these theories the contribution of cultural influences is minimized. The child is essentially locked-stepped into a stage-by-stage unfolding of graphic expressions toward the goal of Piaget's formal operations or Western realism. As noted by Pariser (1983), "art educators might entertain the idea that there are many endpoints to the development of artistic skill, and that the 'natural' endpoint of children's graphic evolution is a function of enculturation/socialization" (p. 53). Second, concomitant with the belief that there is a predefined endpoint, the characteristics of early figurative drawings are often considered to be problems or limitations or are discussed as if they indicate a lack within

children. Either sufficient time for practice or direct instruction are considered necessary to overcome characteristics attributed to inadequate concept development, percept formation, or personality integration. It might be noted that the history of adult art is also often presented in art history classes as a series of graphic problems to be overcome with each stylistic change (read as improvement) to be met with a sense of accomplishment and a marveling at how previous generations could have overlooked the obvious. Third, in most instances and consistent with the two above-cited trends in the literature, children's drawings are not usually related to adult art except as they might be preparatory to the ostensible sophistication and complexity of adult art.

Although the more traditional, time-honored theories of child art provide a valuable psychological foundation for the study of art, discrepancies within these theories appear to primarily emanate from not allowing for the influences of culture and not allowing for the persistence of some innate factors in adult art. Within stage variations and across domain differences should not be considered as problems to be overcome, but rather as indicative of viable choices that fit the requirements of a particular time and place in the child's life.

Models of Child-Adult Relationships

With few exceptions, most child art development theories truncate descriptions of artistic development with the onset of adolescence,

formal operations, or Western realism. Certainly there are qualitative differences between the drawings of children and adult art in regard to intent and actual visual results. However, the persistence of some aspects of children's graphic configurations in adult art, the universal cross-cultural presence of some of those configurations, as well as some striking differences between child and adult art suggest that a combination of choices is being made among universal and relative factors of influence. Toward this conclusion, theories will be herein reviewed that refer in some way to the child-adult relationship.

Foremost, there are theorists who propose a linear development, wherein "the child gradually moves from an awareness of the separation of self and environment to a stage where it realizes that objects and forces outside the self are capable of being manipulated and later conceptualized" (Jenkins, 1980, p. 57). Formal knowledge acquisition, degrees of self-awareness, and graphic symbolization proceed to adult levels of complexity and sophistication that are considered to be an improvement over the child's concrete operations.

Gablik (1977), in her book aptly titled Progress in Art, gives stage theory a boost into cultural dimensions. Gablik proposes that the history of Western art parallels the stages of Piaget's model. The inactive stage, represented by Pre-Renaissance art, is characterized by art with socio-magical functions and without spatial, compositional integration. The iconic stage of Renaissance

art represents a concern for visual verisimilitude and the integration of concrete objects in space. Despite Gablik's protestations to the contrary, the evident conclusion is that twentieth century nonobjective art represents the pinnacle of artistic achievement within her scenario of progress. At this third and final stage, the artist is no longer hampered by the limitations of the physical world; likewise, within stage theory, the adolescent who attains formal operations enters the world of abstract ideas and deductive thinking, which, not coincidentally, is given the highest plaudits in Western modernity's hierarchy of knowledge.

Similar and equally ingenious developmental historical parallels have been found among artistic theories, stages of art, and levels of cognitive attainment. For example, Jenkins (1980) finds a chronological as well as developmental progression among the art theories of Plato, Schiller, Read, Dewey, and Langer that parallels Piaget's levels and Panzarella's stages of aesthetic experience (renewal, motor-sensory, withdrawal, and fusion-emotional). Again, as with Gablik, a progression from the concrete to the abstract is forecast, with the latter being the desired state.

As Pariser (1983) has noted, besides being highly ethnocentric, theories such as Gablik's that describe a progression toward a single, culturally verified endpoint are subject to numerous qualifications. Yakel (1980), who ascribes to Gablik's framework, sees strong similarities between the early drawings of children and

twentieth century abstract art, yet he ascribes logical, formal intent to the later. The possibility that the twentieth century abstract artist may be setting Piaget's model on its head is not considered.

Although the means and reasons for the journey may differ, the endpoint of artistic development is the same for Gablik (1977), Jenkins (1980), and Yakel (1980). Gablik, in particular, would have one believe that artists, throughout the centuries, have been involved in a quest to overcome pictorial limitations that has consisted of getting the drapery just right, wiping off archaic smiles, depicting foreshortening, and, finally, achieving the ultimate by dispensing with the mimetic image altogether.

In a very different vein, Kellogg proposes that the spontaneous configurations of children's drawings, such as mandalas, crosses, sun shapes, and radials, reappear in adult art and are given cultural significance by adult populations. As such, adult art is a recollection of childhood expressions; the good graphic Gestalts of children are the ones that are remembered, enhanced, and repeated. "Child art contains the estnetic forms most commonly used in all art, including representational work" (Kellogg, p. 44). For Kellogg, children's graphic work serves as a psychological prototype for quality, adult art.

Based on the analysis of over a million preschool-age children's drawings, Kellogg certainly presents the most comprehensive and

explicit theory of child-adult art relationships. The difficulty with Kellogg's linkage of child to adult art is that it is done solely on the basis of aesthetics. Within Kellogg's model, the characteristics of children's early work are attributed to design solutions; the pictorialization that results from the child's formal socialization is considered to mark the demise of aesthetic values. Consistent with Clive Bell's (1958) admonition that representational aspects are inconsequential in true art, the formal order of art, according to Kellogg, constitutes enduring qualities that are appreciated separate from whatever social or personal functions the art object might have. According to Kellogg, a drawing is first of all art and only secondly a pictorial representation.

It appears that the few theories that link child and adult art are conveniently teleological in the direction of Western artistic changes or are asocial in that art is considered separate from its cultural functions. These theories are clearly the product of twentieth century Western thought wherein there has been an emphasis on art's formal qualities rather than contextual uses. Although the historical origins of art will probably always be in dispute and the basic impetus for continuing artistic production is variable, clearly art has, if not as a first cause, certainly as a major cause the fulfillment of social functions. Art created for art's sake is primarily a twentieth century luxury, not how art has been appreciated and how it has functioned throughout most of history.

Since few cultures have created art solely for its own sake, let alone as an abstract expression, a theory of art focused toward those ends has limited practical, as opposed to theoretical, applicability.

Artistic Selection Rather than Artistic Development

It is unfortunate that the artistic expression of children and of adults has been put in terms of development. Despite qualifications that "development is one thing, progress is another" (Pariser, 1983, p. 53), development is change, and change within the lexicon of modernity means improvement. As such, a value judgment is implicit within "development." It is herein suggested that selection, or perhaps choice, be substituted for development. Artistic expression needs to be considered as consisting of selections or choices for reasons and outcomes that make sense within a given context, rather than as a development to predefined ends that are prescribed for all instances.

Western medieval art has size distortions and isomorphic perspective not because of a lack of knowledge or because society, in toto, was at the preconcrete stage of thinking. Artistic conventions were selected and developed that were compatible with the medieval world view. Numerous other examples can be cited of how aesthetic outcomes vary from the logic of stage theory. The ancient Egyptians invented the arch many years before it was used in other cultures, but the Egyptians only placed the arch in areas of buildings obscured from easy view since the arch did not give the desired visual effect

(Rapoport, 1968). Within Gablik's thesis, any technological development as significant as the arch would, ipso facto, be flaunted in the historic journey to artistic perfection. As another example, the absence of shading and linear perspective in pre-twentieth century Chinese art cannot be attributed to a lack of knowledge of those conventions nor to the Chinese not visually perceiving those qualities in the environment. When European missionaries introduced chiaroscuro and linear perspective to China, these conventions were readily understood and incorporated into Chinese art for a short time—and then just as quickly abandoned. The Chinese artist was not concerned with capturing visual verisimilitude, so realistic conventions were not invented or adopted from other cultures even though such conventions would have represented a step up the so-called developmental ladder (Rowley, 1947).

If development is to be retained as a viable description of the artistic process, it needs to be used specific to cultural and individual circumstances. Jackson Pollock's development as a twentieth century artist was tentatively accepted by the avant garde establishment but would have been considered lunacy even among the vanguard of other centuries. There is no all-time, chiseled in stone, prescribed steps for artistic development. Using the example of how children acquire map drawing skills, Feldman (1980) discusses development as being within domains of knowledge rather than within the child as Piaget does. This, however, begs the issue of cross-

cultural variability of meaning and structure given to each domain of knowledge. There is no one structure and developmental sequence to artistic expression or map drawing. Characteristics cited by Feldman as being steps within the developmental sequence of map drawing, such as size and spatial distortions, might be the endpoint of map drawing if one's intent is on showing significance of physical site or on showing the time required to traverse an uneven terrain. In other words, even if development is put within domains of knowledge, the sequence and endpoint of development is cross-culturally or even individually variable.

A Universal-Relative Theory of Artistic Possibilities

Artistic selection from among universal and relative possibilities is far from a license for idiosyncratic choice. Rather, artistic selection is a process that occurs, often subconsciously, within the universal domain of innate factors and within the relative domain of culturally noninnate factors. Moreover, such selection occurs throughout the full spectrum of graphic expression, from the child's earliest scribblings to the art of the mature artist. A series of potentialities and possibilities are available from universal and relative categories. Over a period of time and within a given culture, artistic expression takes on a recognizable pattern due to the potentials that are developed and the possibilities selected. As such, art is not necessarily an improvement overtime but is rather a barometer of socio-psychological

orientations toward available options.

The theory of universal-relative selection possibilities that is being proposed in this paper emanates from the following assumptions:

1. Artistic expression reveals a combination of universal and relative factors of influence.
2. Until approximately the ages of five to seven, children's graphic configurations are primarily due to universal options.
3. Formal socialization after the ages of five to seven results in the interjection of relative influence factors.
4. Innate, universal factors are most pristinely evident at the child end of the spectrum; relative factors are most clearly expressed in mature adult art (Wilson & Wilson, 1982).
5. The child-adult art relationship can be studied to ascertain the mix of universal and relative factors.
6. The degree and nature of universal and relative influences and their mix give art its particular individual or cultural flavor.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The chart in Figure 1 indicates some of the broad categories of universal and relative options available for selection. Early childhood and adult expressions parallel options within universal and relative domains, with the particular selections made from these domains resulting in universal themes and configurations and in

relative themes and configurations respectively. The range of options available in the universal and relative domains is a function of time and a concomitant increase in life experiences and development of skills. This aspect is indicated as the temporal dimension on the chart. Skills, of course, may not be developed, but, if they are, a certain amount of maturation, life experiences, and learning opportunities is necessary to do so. As indicated on the chart, early childhood expressions primarily emanate from biological potentialities and personal experiences. After a certain level of motor control is developed and the enculturation process is underway, options may be weighted in any direction or selected in any pattern among universal and relative options given the restraints and possibilities of individual psychology and cultural values.

Adult art, as an individual's oeuvre or an entire culture's art forms, may be analyzed at any temporal point of its creation in relationship to the options that have been selected from universal and relative categories. The curvilinear shape on the chart, representing adult art, traverses all categories of both realms and indicates that art forms may include aspects similar to childhood art as well as values and knowledge that are primarily part of adult experiences. Some categories within the universal and relative realms may be merely touched upon, others may be the primary focus. For example, twentieth century surrealism would probably indicate an emphasis on personal biography as it relates to the universally

experienced psychological phenomena of dream and myth. The self-conscious focus of Bauhaus artists on functions and materials as these relate to form would probably be weighted in the relative realm toward cultural values and social requirements. It is herein proposed, however, that few art forms that deserve that label would not have their sources both in the common human experience of universals and in the needs of a particular time and place.

It should also be noted that when adult art resembles aspects of child art, this is not due to a literal recapitulation whereby child art is actually copied. Rather, child-adult similarities are due to their having common, universal sources that continue to have significance in the adult life of the individual and in the social organization of a culture. Children's drawings appear to possess some structural aspects and themes that are verified and given significance through adult life experiences. Such graphic aspects have a universal appeal and appear in essentially all cultures in some form. Other aspects of children's art have meanings that only have relevance in some cultures; when these fit or are adaptable to existing social needs, they are given expression in adult art. Finally, the majority of the aspects of children's drawings have limited universal or social application and do not appear in adult art.

Art is the result of a series of stylistic and functional choices made from universal and relative possibilities boundaried by the

circumstances of time and place. Perceptual and conceptual development, available materials and technology, social values and contemporaneous artistic conventions, etc., act as both restraints and possibilities for selection. At any one point in the art of an individual or of a culture, factors from both universal and relative domains are operative. It is not the purpose of the theory outlined in this paper to predict exactly what choices will be made, but rather to describe the general interactive process involved in making any artistic choice. A theory of universal-relative selection possibilities eschews the asocial template approach of stage theory on the belief that choice, variation, a certain amount of chance, and the possibility for some predictability need to be built into one's operating premises.

Universal Factors of Influence

Universal influences consist of two major categories. First, there is the biological potential each human inherits as a member of the species, such as upright stature, binocular vision, motor abilities, cognitive potentialities, and so on. Biological needs for food, shelter, and procreation, and the requirements of human affiliation, affection, and mutual protection through some type of social organization may also be included here. Second, there are universal influences from world processes that include the physical principles of gravity and movement; cycles of the seasons and planets; time regularities of night and day, and so on. Piaget's

stages in the "acquisition of the object concept, space, time, causality, etc." (Feldman, 1980, p. 12), have their source of predictability in inherited biological potentials and world processes; these form a common base of experience and universal bodies of knowledge for all individuals and groups. Universals are subject to development inasmuch as life experiences bring about an increase in understanding and an ability to manipulate variables.

The distinction needs to be made between innate universals and social universals. Social universals are part of the life history of all individuals once the socialization process begins in earnest (Campbell, 1959). For example, some type of kinship grouping is evident in all cultures, yet, which family/clan members are given the greatest importance, the role each plays, and meanings attributed to kinship interactions will vary cross-culturally. In contrast, innate universals are the inherited province of all humans, although some universals such as perceptual facilities may require time for development and do take on a social flavor. The young child possesses innate universal potentialities in rudimentary form, and these provide links to adult behaviors.

Relative Factors of Influence

The ways in which each culture contributes noninnate factors to artistic expression as well as modifies innate and social universals are so numerous and so varied that each cultural context needs to be considered separately. On a purely experiential level, darkness

obscures vision, light illuminates objects. However, the symbolism, if any, attached to these polarities is mediated by cultural values. Darkness can be associated with threats of evil, of the unknown, of hidden passions; or darkness may, in the case of Hindu temple architecture, be used to symbolize the Absolute and to allow the worshipper in the darkness of the interior to experience spiritual unity and a turning inward away from the illumination of the material world. As another example, the most predictable of human events, namely death, which some theorists such as Malraux (1949a) and Kubler (1962) consider to be life's ultimate enigma and the raison d'etre for the will-to-art, may have any number of culturally relative meanings and forms. To the medieval Christian, death may have been considered a release from the worldly "view of tears," while a less optimistic view of death could be expected from a practicing hedonist or nineteenth century philosophical realist.

Theorists of artistic development are remiss if the role social factors have on artistic production and response is not included. It might even be suggested that the power of art and its ubiquity in all cultures throughout time and space can be attributed to its dual sources in universal and relative experiences and its dual role of conveying what it means to be a member of the human race and what it means to be human at a particular time and place. Perhaps even part of the fascination with the graphic work of children emanates from the microcosm such work presents of the impending interplay between

the universal and the relative in adult art and in life in general.

Child Drawings - Adult Art Relationships

Wilson and Wilson (1982) have rightly noted that "there is no culture in which the innate and the influence are isomorphic" (p. 16). The innate rules so evident in children's art are most often overridden by outside influences in adult art. But, universal factors also subtly endure. Although each culture has its own so-called graphic goals, there is no need to consider universal factors, except as they are in conflict with cultural imperatives, as something to be overcome. This is exactly what has caused the difficulties with stage theory, wherein it is assumed that the child, and later the adult, must fulfill a predefined aesthetic manifest destiny that involves eschewing all that is reminiscent of its origins or of a less complex stage.

The child's most commonly drawn images, often schematically rendered, such as those of human figures, shelters, forms of transportation, and types of vegetation, constitute basic needs, common interactions, and generic objects of human existence. Mandalas, crosses, suns, radials, and their combinations, appear in the drawings of all children and likewise reappear within the cosmology of all cultures. Even more subtly, children's drawings reveal modes of apprehension and affect through rhythm, balance, proportion, and symmetry, and through the completeness and integrity given each object that is drawn. Repetition, symmetry, and stability

in adult art have been linked to breathing patterns, cycles of biological functions, existence in a gravity-bound world, the form of the human body, and so on (Giedion, 1961; Grillo, 1975; Meier, 1942). Children's drawings reveal thematic and structural principles that are, in many instances, symbolic of actions and meanings that are preparatory for adult life.

When one notes similarities between child and adult art and then similarities between art and human experiences, care must be taken that one does not attribute to the child great prophetic abilities or mystical, intuitive insights, much less get caught up in a Rousseauian romanticism that extolls the joys and virtues of childhood. Due to the construction of the child's musculature and to his/her visual capabilities, some early abstract configurations are the only graphic expressions within the child's abilities (Lansing, 1969, p. 196). The integrity of each object drawn may simply be due to the effort required to invent two-dimensional equivalents, i.e., the child focuses on local solutions and ignores spatially integrating shapes (Eisner, 1972). By repeating shapes and images, children are able to practice and improve on their work. "Rudimentary concepts and a limited number of concepts necessitate the repetition of form" (Lansing, 1969, p. 217). The stability afforded by balance and symmetry may emanate from a preference for simplicity and a need to stabilize images, or, according to Kellogg (1969), the child may be creating a pleasing design.

The validity of any one or combination of these explanations for universal characteristics in child art does not, however, detract from the thesis of this paper. Namely, child and adult art are linked by a selection process among universal and relative possibilities that varies with context and circumstances. The fact that certain configurations and images present in all child art also appear in the adult art of all cultures suggest that children's drawings contain structural and thematic potentialities that are verified by life in all cultures. Only such a relationship is explanatory of why childhood signs and symbols continue to appear in adult art, although consciousness of import on the part of the child is certainly not being implied.

The main point to be made from focusing on the links between child and adult art is that graphic goals are variable. Rather than unfolding in step-by-step predictable stages toward a value-laden endpoint that conveniently coincides with the current dominant world view, artistic expression consists of a nonlinear path that may double back and form combinations in any number of ways among relative and universal categories. This is especially true in a century in which literally all the art from past and current cultures is available for study through rapid communication and media advances, comprising what Malraux (1949b) has called the museum without walls. Moreover, only the most isolated of historic cultures have not been exposed to a variety of stylistic models and artistic

functions from neighboring cultures through trade, communication, invasions, travel, and so on. Yet, not all stylistic models were adopted (Fischer, 1971). The fact that the art of each culture has a distinctive character suggests that not all possibilities are actually considered, consciously or subconsciously, as viable options.

A Modified Theory—of Possibilities and Restraints

Although there is no predetermined endpoint to individual or cultural artistic development, neither is there a complete lack of restraints. Not every aesthetic contingency is possible; not everything goes. The fact that children's early drawings look remarkedly similar and change at somewhat predictable intervals gives validity to stage theory on the basis of an increase in learning experiences rather than an automatic result of maturation (Eisner, 1972). In Western societies, the intense apprenticeship of enculturation that is initiated by public school attendance shifts influence factors from the domain of universal and personal development to cultural variability. Gardner (1983) suggests that all symbolic potentialities are possible prior to the influence of culture. With school attendance, the child is channeled into culturally approved notation systems and "comes to ignore those symbolic potentials that are neglected within his own culture" (Gardner, 1983, p. 310). One might modify Gardner's interpretation of the child's natural inclination toward spontaneity by noting that

although the pre-enculturated child has the potential for developing any notational system, due to the limitations of physical and mental capabilities and limited world experiences, the child's repertoire is fairly predictable. The strong similarities among children's early drawings indicate that structural propensities are being established that are amenable to adaptation and development when cultural influences begin.

The very young child operates primarily within the limitations and possibilities of innate, universal factors. Adults, in a somewhat similar manner, learn the aesthetic conventions of their culture and respond to and create art according to their pattern of aesthetic socialization (Hamblen, 1984). This does not preclude the fact that individuals and entire cultures may change aesthetic patterns, transcend symbolic boundaries, and explore alternatives. Humans are both the products and the creators of their reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). For adult and young child, there are both restraints and possibilities that elude the specificity and predictability of stage theory. This interchange between restraint and possibility is played out among universal and relative factors and along temporal dimensions that usually portend an incremental increase in cognitive and motor abilities, greater world understanding through more experiences, and an increase in consciousness of intent and meaning. For example, a certain level of perceptual and motor dexterity is necessary to render linear

perspective, but whether that skill will be valued or even developed is a matter of choice and cultural applicability.

Once the enculturation process formally begins, graphic expressions differ cross-culturally. Aspects of child art provide preliminary structures of innate and socially universal apprehensions that may be developed and enhanced in ways uniquely culture-specific or many may simply be ignored, depending on cultural values and needs. As such, adult art is no more true if it closely resembles child art than if it eschews most early conventions. Artistic expression is neither a quest for improvement nor an unfolding of predetermined aesthetic skills. If art has a developmental destiny, it is to bespeak of the universal and relative options available at a given time and place.

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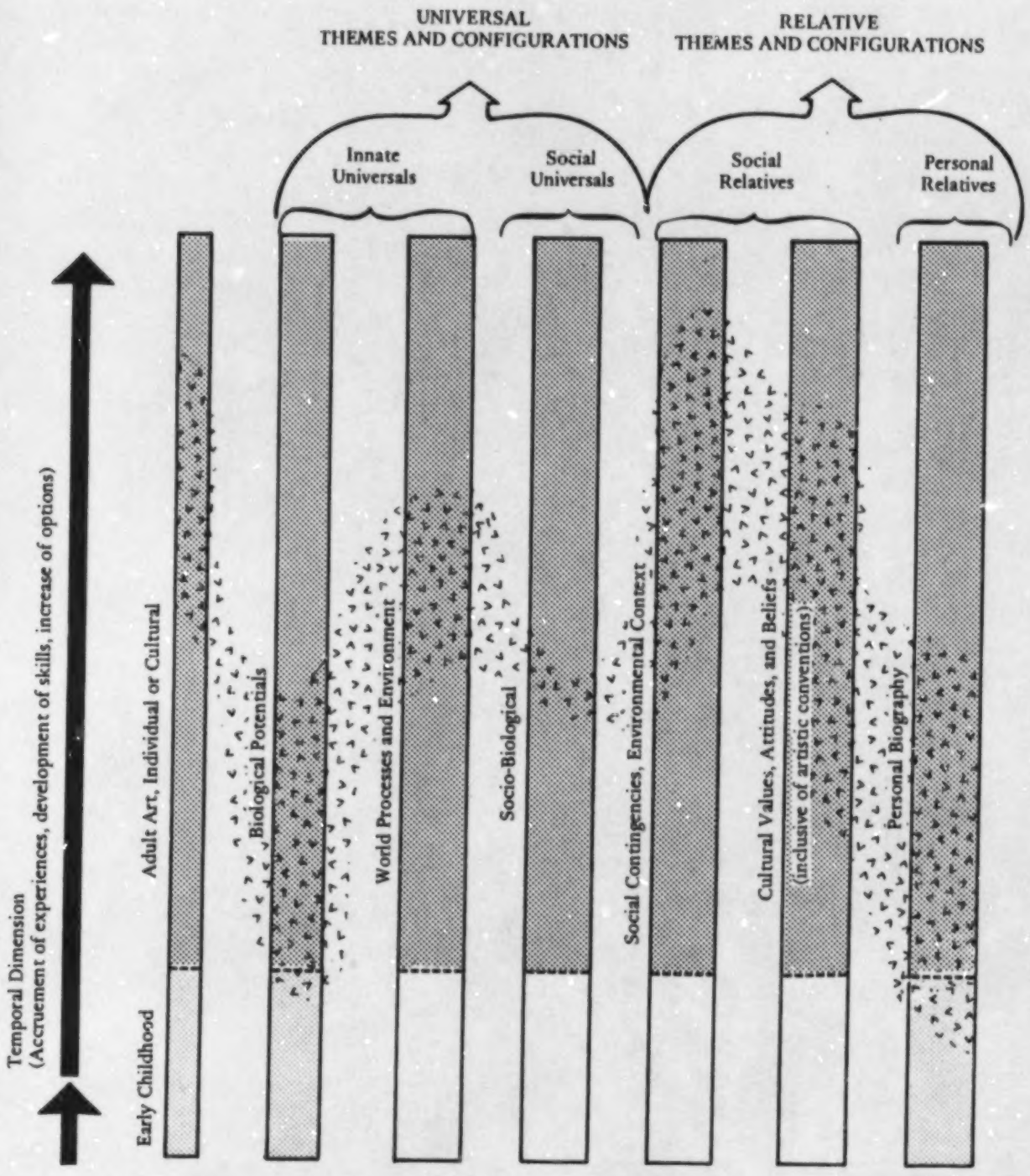
Footnote

Unless otherwise specified, references to children's drawings pertain to work done in the late scribbling and early to mid-figurative stages. As to whether the graphic work of children should be considered art is not dealt with in this paper. For an examination of this complex issue, see DiBlasio (1983).



ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT: SELECTIONS FROM UNIVERSAL AND RELATIVE OPTIONS

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Artistic development: Selections from universal and relative options.